Property Of 5
Sierra Historic Sites Assoc.
Library

THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

MADERA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

VOLUME 9 - NUMBER 2 APRIL, 1969

"The Story of the Hunter Drug Company"
As told by Gladys Hunter Wilson
Interviewers: Mr. & Mrs. Seth Turoonjian
Typed from tape by Mrs. June English, 1968

Gladys Hunter Wilson or "Happy" as she is known by her many friends tells the following story of her family and her life in Madera up to the present time. Very little has been left out in the narration just in places some sentences shortened, repetition and comments by interviewers omitted merely to save space.

"My name is Gladys Hilliary Hunter Wilson. I am the daughter of William Wilken-Wood Hunter, the owner and founder of the Hunter Drug Company in 1890. My father and mother (Louise Matilda Bertosky) were both born in Mariposa County. They were married there. My father was born in 1863, in Hornitos, mother was born in 1862. My grandfather Hunter came from Iowa. My sister Alena Loretta and I were born there too. I had a brother born in Madera but he died when he was sixteen. My father had his early training as a druggist in a Mariposa Drug Store owned by a Dr. Reid.

Father heard that there was a drug store for sale in Madera so he moved his family to Madera and established the Hunter Drug Company in 1890. My gradnfather, William Wilken Hunter was an apprentice druggist, did not get his final papers but my father had his, of course.

My grandfather was a wonderful man. He always wore a cap, so he was called "Cap". He ran a cigar store in the corner of our drug store. It opened on to the street so he could serve from the inside. Grandfather used to take us to Fresno on the train to see good shows. We would stay all night at the Grand Central Hotel.

My father continued with the drug store until his death in 1926. My sister and I then took over; my sister passed away in 1956 and since that time I have managed the store.

Madera has quite a history. I remember well, when we did not have electricity. We used kerosene lamps. When we finally obtained electricity the plant would run until midnight and then it was back to kerosene! The power plant was in back of my store, the Farm Maid Ice Cream is there now. When we were little we used to sneak down there at night and watch those big wheels turn, but the owner would shoo us out so we wouldn't get hurt.

I can remember when there were over 20 saloons on Yosemite Avenue. There was mud---mud! When it rained, it would be a foot deep. They put large planks on one side of the street to the other and you waited your turn to cross. We had board sidewalks and awnings."

Mrs. Turoongian: Did you help your father in the store?

"Yes. At 13 years of age, Sister had to quit school and help Dad, after Grandpa Hunter died. She worked with him for many, many years.

When I was about 13 I began helping in the store too. I worked there until I was married then after a year I worked in the store again until my husband and I moved to San Francisco. After three years my husband passed away and I returned to Madera to help sister and I am still working here today."

"I think we had one of the first soda fountains in the valley. In those days we made our own ice cream. Ask some of the old timers today what our ice cream was like," Best west of the Mississippi! Nothing like it. Sister was very particular about the ice cream and wouldn't allow anyone to help her."

Mrs. Turoongian: Did you use the old crank method?

"Yes, at first, then we used a gasoline engine to turn the freezer. We had the first fans in Madera; just two blades. We had five in the store; they were run by a gasoline engine too. It seemed that on the hottest days the belts would break. It was all on pulleys underneath the building. The trenches are still down there under the store today."

"We quit making ice cream in 1918 or '19. Too much equipment was needed. We ran the fountain from May to November. We made about 10 kinds of ice cream. When electricity came in we had a 20 gallon freezer, and an electric ice crusher."

Mrs. Turoongian: How has the inside of your store changed?

"Well, it has been remodeled three times. I remember when we used gas lights. We had an old "Pot bellied" stove. We burned coal in it, then later converted it into an oil burner. I was scared to death of it."

Mrs. Turoongian: Do you run the store by yourself?

"Yes, I have a pharmicist, two girls at the counter and two at the fountain. We have always had a fountain. I wish we had our old fountain, it was darling! Sold it, as it was too small. Some days we would sell 25 gallons of ice cream and we worked. Remember those old iron chairs? I still have some of those. We had eight tables and four chairs to a table, down the center of the store. Today there are "islands" with merchandise. I could sell those old chairs. Years ago the merchandise was in show cases, old fashioned show cases against the walls."

Mrs. Turoongian: Did you make milk shakes?

"Yes by hand. I didn't make them until the mixers came into use. I remember a man, Mr. Kirby who had a little stand on the corner where "Beneficial" is now. He had the first milk shake machine, it looked like the old time coffee grinders."

"We had a telephone between our store and home and was connected to Dr. Reids office too. We called them grinders. Our number was 23 for many, many years. Mr. Sayre had the first suburban phone.

"I live in one of the oldest houses in Madera. The one next door and the one right across the street were all built about the same time and by the same man. Our house has been remodeled 3 times.

Mrs. Turoongian: Do you remember who built the houses?

"Yes, Mr. Prosser. Mr. William H. Thurman, our first County Sheriff owned the one across the street. My Dad bought this one about 1893.

"Madera was a wild town in those days. I can remember when one of our young dudes rode his horse right into the Peerless Saloon. (Right next door to our store.)"

Mrs. Turoongian: What kind of people lived in Madera then, lumber men mainly?

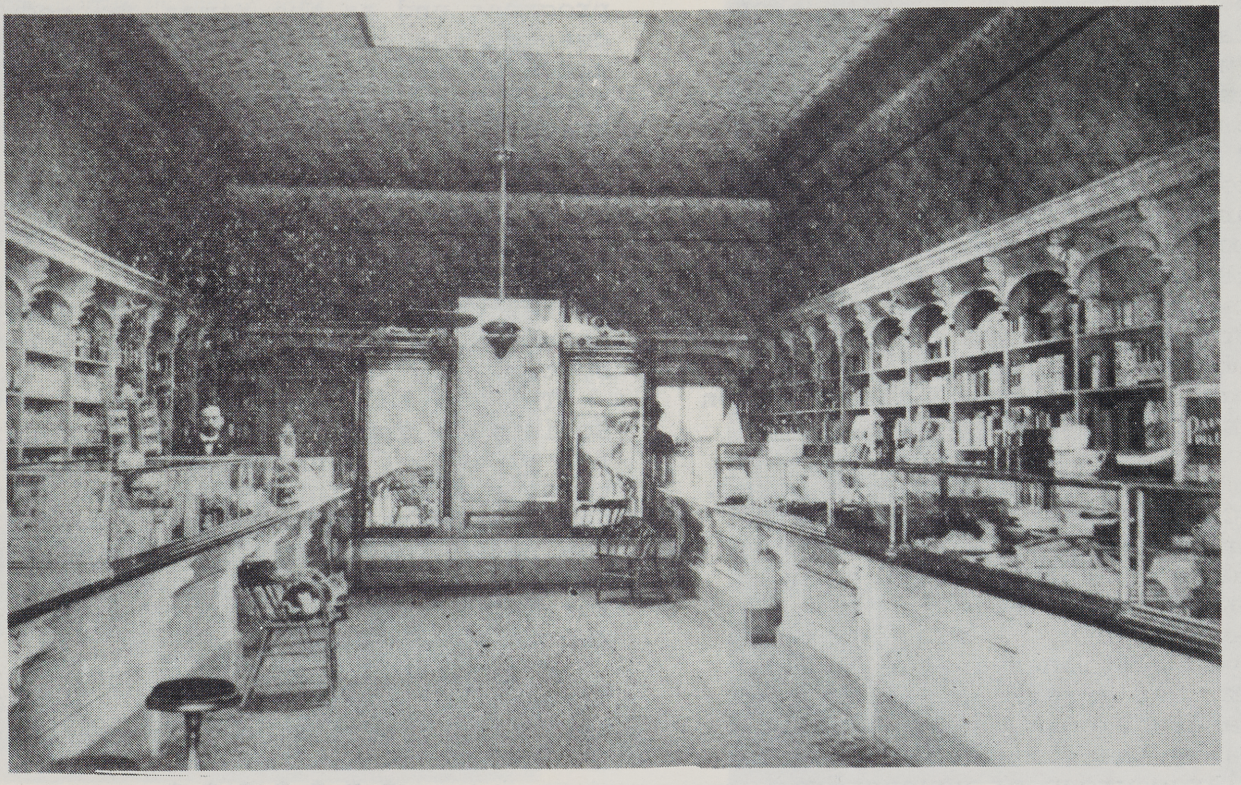
"Yes, we had Madera Sugar Pine and the Thurman Sash and Door Factory. The Thurmans later bought this house next to me. Mr. Thurman was a very smart man, quite an inventor, a very sucessful business man. The union wanted to come in, should I tell that?"

Mr. and Mrs. Turoongian: Oh yes!

"The union wanted to come in and get the men to join the union. Mr. Thurman said, 'If you do, I'll close the factory.' No one believed him but he closed the factory. This was a great loss to Madera. They had a large payroll."

"I can remember when the court house burned in 1906. Very exciting."

Mrs. Turoongian: Did the court house



Interior of Early Drug Store

burn in the afternoon?

"I don't remember but I know I was there. The young man who was later to become my husband fought in that fire. They were all volunteer firemen in those days.

Mrs. Turoongian: Is that where you met your husband?

"No, I met him in high school. I went with him eight years before we were married. I had a wonderful husband. His name was Shirley Wilson. The Wilson family were from San Francisco, my mother-in-law was from an old San Francisco family. My father-in-law at one time owned a large acreage around what is today the Piedmont area. He was a sheep man. He lost everything in the crash of 1888, then moved to Newman and then to Madera. My husband worked for the lumber industry in Madera and in San Francisco.

Mrs. Turoongian: Do you remember any exciting experiences about the railroad?

"No, except when all we young girls, on Sunday afternoons, dressed up in our finest--went down to meet the train coming in from San Francisco, the four o'clock. Why, I don't know.

Mrs. Turoongian: Thats' like dragging "Main" today.

"That's right, we dragged "E" Street. I don't know how we ever got away with it. My father wouldn't allow me but he didn't catch me I guess."

"What else can I tell you?

Mrs. Turoongian: What about the Park here in Madera?

"Oh yes, Mr. Heiskell. The park has never been the same since he passed on. He kept the park just beautiful. He was a talented man. One daughter still lives here in Madera, Naomi Heiskell. (That's another family story that should be written).

Gladys told this story about the shooting accident that happened in the W. B. Thurman home right next door to Gladys on 416 North C. She was 8 or 9 years old at the time.

William B. Thurman was Sheriff then. A burglar entered the Thurman home one morning about 2 a.m. He entered by the side porch, climbing in through a window. Mrs. Thurman awakened her husband and said, "Will, I hear a noise down stairs. Mr. Thurman said, "It's probably cats." There was no electricity, so he came carrying a kerosene lamp, calling "Kitty, kitty." At the same moment the burglar shot Mr. Thurman. Mrs. Thurman came running downstairs and called my father. Father grabbed his coat and put it on over his night shirt and went over there. They put Mr. Thurman on the sofa and packed cloth into the wound. Dr. W. C. Reid lived just back of the Thurman home. He came over and assisted in stopping the bleeding. Mr. Thurman recovered. The burglar was never caught.

Gladys mentioned in the interview many early families that lived within a few blocks of her home. She recalls the fun and escapades of the large group of youngsters that grew up there and later became leading citizens of Madera in their varied careers. Among those mentioned were: Kinneys, Daultons, Huffmans, Beans, Currans, Thurmans, Conleys, Dickensons and E. H. Cox.

Gladys said she and her sister took piano lessons from Mrs. Baird who lived on Central Avenue. The house is still there. The Bairds had one daughter, Martha. She became a famous pianist and later married John D. Rockefeller II.

Gladys Wilson was named Queen of "Old Timer's Day in September, 1968".

She is very active in the Soroptimist Club of Madera, is a charter member. Her slogan has been, "Hunter's Drug Store since 1890, we have a pill for every ill."

We cannot conclude this story without a few more comments about "Doc" Hunter.

Many may still recall the original Hunter Drug Store, with a crude wooden sign which hung by the door way. William Wilken Hunter was generally known as "Doc" Hunter. He bought the store in 1890 from Dr. J. T. Surbough. The building was built by Return Roberts. "Doc" Hunter believed in progress and as the times changed he changed the store to keep up with the needs of the community. He added a soda fountain, sold home-made ice cream. The thing to do after a Saturday evening show was to go to Hunters' ice cream parlor. "Doc" Hunter was revered and admired by all the town.

In 1898 it was necessary to have faster communication so "Doc" Hunter established Madera's first telephone system.

The Madera County Historical Society is grateful to the Turoongians for giving of their time in order to obtain this interview. The Society has 16 single spaced typed pages of the taped interview. It will be kept on file as a valuable resource for historical information on early Madera.

Mrs. Wilson shared with the interviewers her collection of early Madera artifacts that she has in her home.

* * * * * * *

HISTORIAN DELAY

The Board of Directors apologize for the delay in this Historian. So many things enter in the production of each issue: time, checking for authenticity, getting the right photographs, space filling and to be sure the material is interesting

* * * * * * *

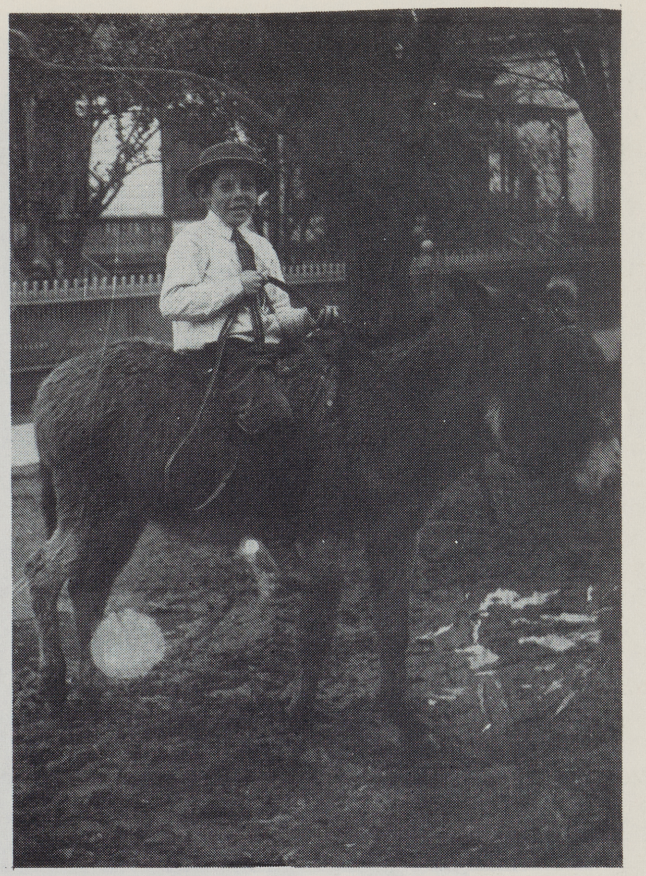
MEMBERSHIP

Our membership is increasing rapidly lately, due to our membership committee.

TAX EXEMPTION
POSTAL RATE

At last we have received our tax exemption from U.S. Bureau of Internal Revenue and have received our bulk mailing privilege. We can now send out letters and Historians at the rate of 1.6¢ when mailing 200 or more pieces. The Board of Directors wish to express their appreciation to the membership for their fine response to our voting request to you on our Articles of Incorporation.





Gladys and Sister Alena - Brother Ellsworth

MOVING DAY

On June 18, with the help of members we moved many items upstairs in our extra room. We now have much more space in our office.

GIFTS

The Society is very fortunate. Recently we acquired 3 pick-up loads of bound Madera Daily Tribunes. This is a most valuable gift. Guy Crow is building the necessary shelving so that these papers may be filed in an orderly way and can be used for research.

We have received many other items not yet cataloged. At the recent Chowchilla meeting we acquired some interesting Chowchilla items.

CHRISTMAS CARD COMMITTEE

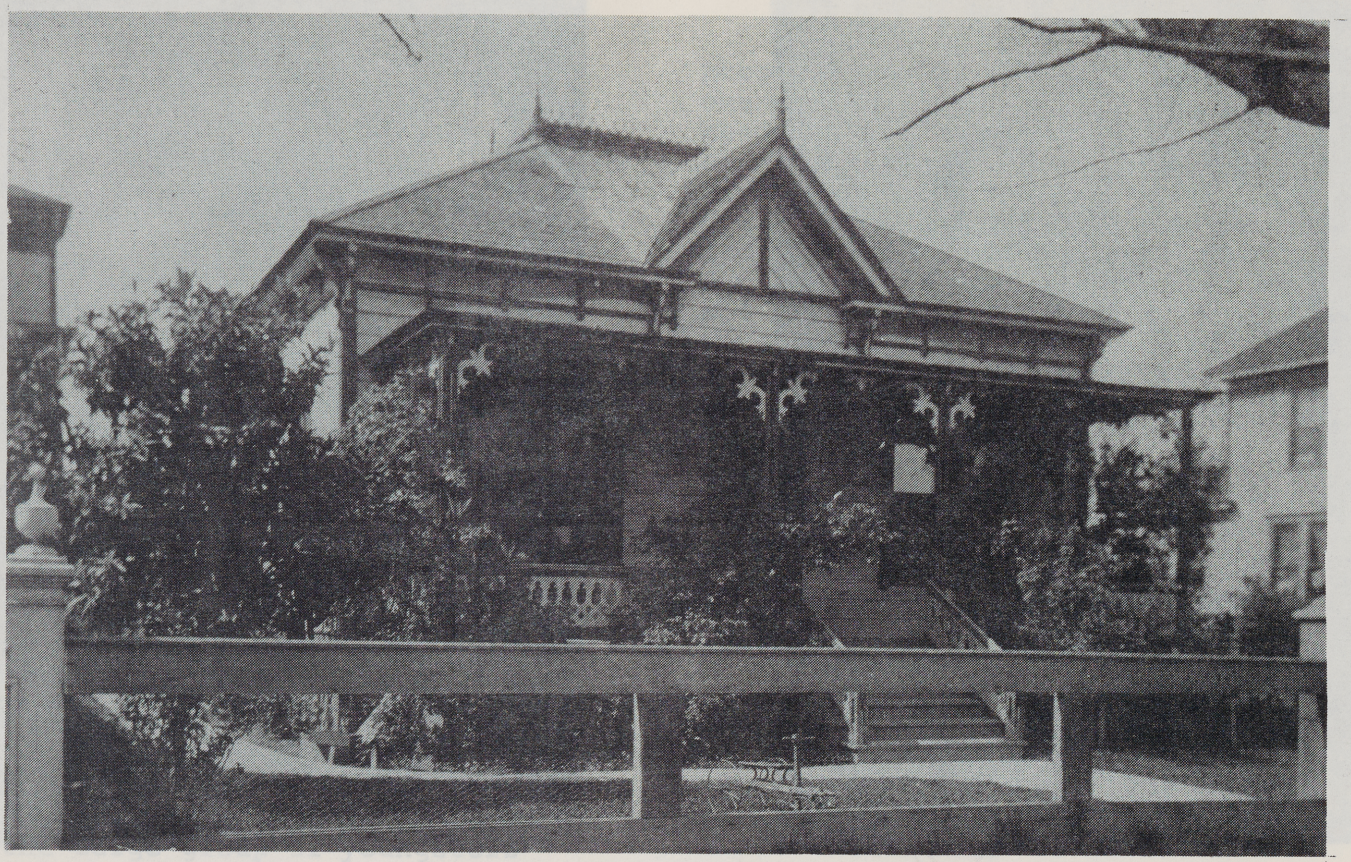
This committee reports that they have a real surprise in store for us. They have four different cards, plus note paper. They are using a Chowchilla picture, one from Oakhurst, one from Madera and one, an early stage coach.

More information will come out in the next Historian.

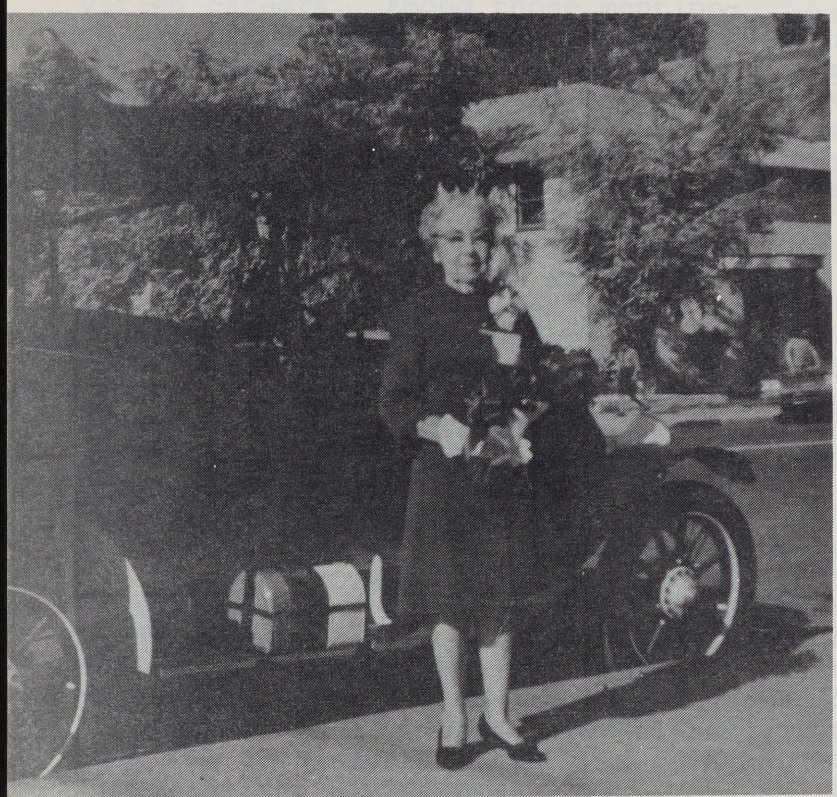
We do make mistakes
We're sorry!

In the Historian Vol. IX - 1, page 2, Column 2, paragraph 1: R.R. Fawlen should read R. R. Fowler.
In the same Historian, page one, second column, last line about Dworack building. This is incorrect but was taken from an early newspaper.

MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN
Managing Editors - Board of Directors
Contributors - Gladys Hunter Wilson
Mr. & Mrs. Seth Turoongian
Recording from tape - June English
Typist for Historian - Betty Gordon
Compiled by - Maud Lindemann
MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN is published quarterly by the Madera County Historical Society, P.O. Box 478, Madera, California.



Hunter Home - 416 North "C"



Mrs. W. W. W. Hunter



"Queen Gladys" - Sept. 1968



William Wilken Wood Hunter

"Doc" Hunter

DAILY, 50c per Month WEEKLY, $1.50 per Year

"Madera Tribune"

Leading Newspaper of the County!!!

(Daily and Weekly)

W. J. DEATER, Editor and Prop.

Commercial Bank
OF MADERA

Authorized Capital $50,000
Paid-Up Capital - - $50,000
Surplus, and undivided profits.....$30,000

RETURN ROBERTS.....President
E. H. COX.....Vice-President
J. G. ROBERTS.....Cashier

DIRECTORS

Return Roberts, J. E. Newman, J. G. Roberts. N. Rosenthal, E. H. Cox.

Transact a general banking business Draws direct on principal cities of the world. Accounts of corporations, firms and individuals solicited.

The Best Place.

EVERYTHING IN THE DRUG LINE

AT

W. W. W. Hunter's

Fine Perfumes and Toilet Articles.

Surbaugh's Drug Store,

Yosemite Avenue, Madera, Cal.

FRESH DRUGS and MEDICINES

TOILET ARTICLES,

Perfumery, Fine Soaps, Sponges, Etc.

Nothing but fresh and genuine drugs kept in stock.
Orders from the country promptly attended to.
Physician's prescriptions and family recipes compounded with the greatest care.

Dr. J. T. Surbaugh, Prop.

W. C. MAZE

REAL ESTATE & INSURANCE AGENT

TOWN PROPERTY A SPECIALTY

Property Bought and Sold

YOSEMITE AVE., — — — MADERA, CAL.

DR. F. R. BROWN

PHYSICIAN and SURGEON

Room 45, This Building

Residence, Lily Lake Yosemite Ave.

Wren & Buchanan

Livery and Feed Stables

Everything First-Class

FRONT STREET, One Block North of Hotel

OWL SALOON
BERENDA, CAL.
Nice Cool Beer
THE FINEST LIQUORS AND CIGARS
ROLLERI - BROTHERS

No Shooting.

On and after this date no shooting will be allowed on the Daulton Ranch.

J. F. DAULTON.

January 30, 1905.